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PARENTS AND BABIES

*A Guide for Home
Economics Program
Assistants*

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AUG 5 - 1966

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PARENTS AND BABIES

A Guide for Home Economics Program Assistants

Your Objectives:

Help parents of babies learn that the first year of life is important . . .

- what a baby learns now helps him learn more later.
- this is when he learns to trust people.

Help parents learn . . .

- to talk to babies
- to give babies things to touch and taste
- to give babies things to see
- to play games with babies.

SOME THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Some people don't pay much attention to babies. Babies stay in bed and don't cause much trouble unless they are hungry, wet, or hurt someplace. But babies need lots of attention. It helps them develop the way they should. The first year of life is important.

Babies learn when they touch, feel, see, taste, and smell different things.

Each baby grows and learns at his own pace. But each baby's growth follows a pattern. He cannot learn until his body is ready. For example, a newborn baby's fingers will close around your finger when you put it in his hand. But he can't reach out and take hold of something. You can try to teach him, but he can't do it until his body is ready.

When the baby's body is ready, he needs things to reach for.

Parents help babies learn when they give them a chance to do the things they are ready to do.

Parents learn to love a baby when they take care of him. A baby smiles, coos, and responds to parents. Parents like this. They get more feeling for the baby. They enjoy and play more with him. This helps the baby develop.

BABIES LEARN BY TOUCH AND TASTE

Mother helps the new baby develop when she holds him close to her body. She helps when she strokes his cheek or rubs his hand. She helps when she rubs his body.

Babies learn through their skin. They learn by touching and feeling. When they are held, stroked, and cuddled, they develop faster. They feel safe. When they are left alone, they don't learn to trust people. They develop more slowly.

The baby's first toys should be things he can grasp. He can grasp the handle of a rattle if it is put in his hand. When he is older he can reach for it and hold it.

When a baby can use his thumb and forefinger together, he needs small things he can pick up. Don't give him anything he might choke on.

Later baby learns to drop things. He needs the kind of toys he can drop and he needs someone to pick them up for him.

Babies need some soft, cuddly toys. Baby will taste these, so they must be washable.

All toys for babies should be safe to chew and taste. Baby learns by tasting and feeling things with his tongue.

HOW BABIES LEARN TO TALK

Babies know how to cry and make sounds. They have to learn to talk. They learn from parents and other people who take care of them.

Parents should talk to the baby when they feed him, change his diapers, give him a bath, and hold him.

When baby is a few months old he is ready to coo and blow bubbles. Parents need to make soothing, encouraging sounds and talk to the baby when he blows bubbles and makes sounds.

Babies need lots of practice with making sounds before they can say words.

Parents feel good when they talk to the baby and the baby smiles or coos back. It makes taking care of a baby more fun. It helps the baby learn and helps him feel good about people.

BABIES LOOK AND LEARN

Babies learn from the things they see. They need to have things to look at. They need to be where they can see around them.

Babies should lie on their backs some of the time so they can see.

They need pictures on the wall to see.

Mothers can hold babies up to look out the window. They can talk to the baby about what they see.

Hang toys above the baby's bed. They should move and be bright colored. This gives the baby something to look at. They help his eyes focus. When he is around 3 months old he will try to reach for the toy. This will help him learn to control his body.

PLAYING GAMES WITH BABY

Babies learn when parents play little games with them.

Pat-a-cake and waving bye-bye help a baby learn to control his hands and arms. These games help him have fun with other people. They help other people enjoy the baby.

Peek-a-boo is a good game. It helps a baby learn that things can

disappear and come back again. This is a hard idea for a child to learn.

During the first year of life the baby begins to learn about his body. Parents help when they play little games with him. They can help him learn to play with his fingers and toes.

HOW TO USE THIS INFORMATION

You'll find many homes where babies get lots of attention. In other homes, you can teach the mother how to take care of the baby.

The best way to teach is by your own actions.

- Hold the baby.
- Stroke his cheek.
- Talk to him.
- Play games with him.

Show the mother how to make some things for the baby to look at.

Talk with the mother about how babies learn.

Give the mother the leaflets on babies:

1. *Babies Touch, Taste, and Learn*
2. *Talk With Baby*
3. *Babies Look and Learn*
4. *Play Games with Babies*

Give only one leaflet at a time. Read and talk about it with the mother.

The materials on *Parents and Babies* for agents, program assistants, and parents, were prepared by Mrs. Roberta C. Frasier, Consultant (Family Life Specialist, Oregon State Extension Service), in collaboration with Edward V. Pope, Human Development and Human Relations Specialist, Division of Home Economics, Federal Extension Service, United States Department of Agriculture.